

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2011-2012**

Agency - ACARA

DEEWR Question No. EW1224_12

Senator Mason asked on 16 February 2012 , Hansard page 82

Question

National Minimum standards

Senator MASON: ...Is there anything more you can tell me about the setting of these minimum standards? We got a fairly cryptic analysis today but no-one seems to want to take particular responsibility for it nor indulge what they are. Ms Paul: I think it is highly technical and highly expert. Dr Hill actually is a measurement expert. He probably could have gone into the technical aspects of how that is set— Senator MASON: He might not have thought I was not up to it—up to numbers. Ms Paul: This goes back to 2008 and before. It has been going for some time. There is a lot of national kind of technical discussion about where you would strike it. There is actually a range of technical aspects to it which if you do want set out we would probably take it on notice, but you would probably get almost a technical tutorial from ACARA. That is probably what you really want. Nonetheless, if you would like me to take it on notice and see if we can get— Senator MASON: If you can

Answer

ACARA has provided the following response.

Purpose

The standards are intended to be a snapshot of typical achievement and do not encompass the full range of what students are taught or what they may achieve.

History

The structure of the NAPLAN scales and bands was developed during 2007 and finalised in 2008. This was prior to ACARA's establishment.

A threshold measure of performance was required for national reporting arrangements. In 2008, the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC) determined that this should be represented for each year level by one of the bands on each of the scales – the National Minimum Standard.

Psychometric model

The psychometric basis for the development of the NAPLAN scales and bands, including the National Minimum Standards, is the Rasch model. The Rasch model enables student ability and item difficulty to be represented on a single scale. This in turn means that any given scale score represents the same level of achievement over time.

NAPLAN scales and bands

NAPLAN results are reported using six scales for reading, narrative writing, persuasive writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy. Each scale is divided into 10 bands and describes the development of student achievement from Year 3 - Year 9.

For each year level, only six of the ten bands are shown on the student report.

- Year 3 student reports show bands 1 to 6
- Year 5 student reports show bands 3 to 8
- Year 7 student reports show bands 4 to 9
- Year 9 student reports show bands 5 to 10

National Minimum Standards

The locations of the bands were determined using Rasch analysis, based on the 2008 NAPLAN results. In locating the bands on the new scales, consideration was given to student performance against the pre-existing benchmark standards.

The pre-existing benchmark standards setting process required expert teachers and curriculum officers to identify the likelihood of a benchmark student (as defined by the benchmark descriptions and exemplars) being able to correctly answer each of the items in the state and territory tests. In the final stage of the process, experts calculated the relevant score on the national scale and then on state and territory scales.

The NAPLAN National Minimum Standards are defined as the second band reported for each year level (i.e., band 2 for Year 3, band 4 for Year 5, band 5 for Year 7 and band 6 for Year 9).